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No. 5

House of Representatives

The House met at 12:30 p.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. MILLER of Florida).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,

February 3, 1998.

I hereby designate the Honorable DAN MILLER to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

NEWT GINGRICH,

Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING HOUR DEBATES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 21, 1997, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning hour debates. The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to 30 minutes, and each Member, except the majority leader, the minority leader, or the minority whip, limited to 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas (Mr. ARMEY) for 5 minutes.

CONGRESS SHOULD NOT SAY "NO" TO THE STUDENTS OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Mr. ARMEY. Mr. Speaker, I am not sure that I will take my whole 5 minutes, but I do have a few things that I would like to point out.

Washington, D.C., has some very, very good schools, has some exceptionally good public schools, and it has some exceptionally good private schools. Unfortunately, the city also has some exceptionally bad schools where we have too many young children that are caught in circumstances

that would almost say they have no opportunity for anything but failure.

Those of us that have met these children have understood what one always understands when one meets a child: This is a very, very special and precious person. We have seen too many cases of children that have the ability, that have the energy, that have the hopes and the dreams that are coupled with the same on the part of their parents and punctuated with prayers for a better opportunity for this child, for us to turn our back on these children.

Mr. Speaker, we will bring to consideration for this body again a bill that would allow scholarships for choice for those families that are disadvantaged so they, like so many more wealthy families, particularly here in D.C. and across the country, could exercise their opportunity to take their child out of a school that is failing that child and move that child to a school where the child will have their hopes and dreams and abilities recognized and nourished.

We have people that oppose this. They oppose it for ideological reasons; they oppose it for institutional reasons; they oppose it for reasons that, quite frankly, I do not understand.

One prominent Senator said, "D.C. parents and ministers and local leaders have made it clear that they do not want vouchers." Another prominent Member of this body made the point, "I think I can say with confidence that the people I represent would deeply resent the imposition of vouchers." That was the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON). "I think I can say with confidence that the people I represent would deeply resent the imposition of vouchers."

What is a voucher? We say to people, we make available to you the opportunity. You can choose or you cannot choose to accept that opportunity for your child.

On October 13, 1997, the Washington Scholarship Fund announced the avail-

ability of 1,000 new scholarships for children that are disadvantaged by being stuck in failing schools. By the deadline last Saturday, 7,573 children applied. One out of every six children eligible for these scholarships applied.

Mr. Speaker, D.C. parents are making the effort.

Let me talk about this a moment. I have had the opportunity to work with the D.C. Scholarship Fund. I have met these parents. I have met these children. I have seen those that have already had the scholarships that have moved to the other schools. I have seen them brighten up and seen them do better. I have seen children that might have been stuck forever with failure emerge and shine.

What child is not precious enough that they ought to have this opportunity? How can somebody's heart be so cold as to say we deny that?

This is not taking money away from the other D.C. schools. The voucher program that we are putting forward says we will add additional money beyond that which is already available to the City of D.C., which has, if not the highest, certainly the second or third highest per capita student budget for their school system of any city in the Nation. And yet, with all that they already have, we have children that are not being well served by the schools; and we are saying, in addition to that money, let us put some more vouchers in place for these little children.

Mr. Speaker, this is a little thing in Washington. The numbers here are very big. The President has got a \$1.73 trillion budget. He has got all kinds of things in that budget, all full of good intentions. Big heart. Something for everyone.

We are saying drive off these Capitol grounds two blocks, three blocks. See the children that do not have the opportunity that children in my district in Texas have to walk to school safe in neighborhoods that are safe; to be with

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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